20th Century Studios Presents

A Lawrence Gordon / Davis Entertainment / Toberoff Entertainment Production

A Dan Trachtenberg Film

PRODUCTION NOTES

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KEY INFORMATION AND CREDITS

(For a full list of credits, please visit Disney Media Kits)

Directed by: Dan Trachtenberg
Screenplay by: Patrick Aison
Story by: Patrick Aison & Dan Trachtenberg
Based on the Characters Created by: Jim Thomas & John Thomas
Produced by: John Davis; Brent O’Connor; Marc Toberoff; Dan Trachtenberg, p.g.a.; Ben Rosenblatt, p.g.a.
Executive Producers: Lawrence Gordon, James E. Thomas, John C. Thomas, Stefan Grube
Director of Photography: Jeff Cutter
Production Designer: Ra Vincent
Editors: Stefan Grube; David Trachtenberg, ACE
Co-Producer: Kathy Siegel
Music by: Sarah Schachner and Benjamin Wallfisch
Costume Designer: Ngila Dickson

Stunt Coordinator: Jacob Tomuri
Creature Designers: Alec Gillis; Wētā Workshop
VFX Supervisor: Olivier Dumont
Visual Effects by: Wētā FX, ILM, Trixter, Important Looking Pirates, Framestore, The Yard
Casting by: Jessica Sherman, CSA; Miranda Rivers & Tina Cleary

Cast: Elle Fanning (Thia), Dimitrius Schuster-Koloamatangi (Dek)

Release Date: In theaters November 7, 2025
Run Time: 107 mins

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SYNOPSIS

Set in the future on a deadly remote planet, "Predator: Badlands" follows Dek, a young Predator outcast from his clan, who finds an unlikely ally in Thia and embarks on a treacherous journey in search of the ultimate adversary.

Q&A WITH DAN TRACHTENBERG
DIRECTOR OF "PREDATOR: BADLANDS"

Do you remember the first time you saw a Predator movie?
The very first "Predator" movie came out when I was still in elementary school and I was not allowed to see it because it was rated R. But I have a very distinct memory of being on my way to a karate tournament and all the sixth-grade boys had seen it. We were in the back of my mom's minivan and they described the entire movie to me. So, I had imagined "Predator" well before I'd ever seen it.

When I eventually did see the movie, the thing that really took me by surprise wasn't just the crazy design of the creature—which was scary, but also super awesome—but the combination of genres. I enjoyed seeing Arnold Schwarzenegger in this militaristic action movie, and then it become an entirely different thing. I think the mainstay, at least for my entries in the franchise, is that Predator movies are this wonderful concoction of multiple genres, of different kinds of set pieces and action. Sometimes you're in a taut suspense scene, sometimes you're in a moment that's building toward a fright, and sometimes you're in an awesome, traditional action scene with explosions and gunfire. You're getting a whole variety, it's not just one note.

Can you give us a brief overview of "Badlands" and what sets it apart from previous Predator films, including "Prey" and "Predator: Killer of Killers," the two films you've previously directed?

“Predator: Badlands” is the first movie in the Predator Universe that focuses on the Predator species known as the Yautja. We’re following the monster for the first time. Dek, the central character, is the runt of the litter in a clan that culls any sign of weakness. The Yautja think one weak link breaks the chain, so facing exile or worse, Dek finds himself on the deadliest planet in the galaxy where he must hunt down an unkillable creature known as the Kalisk to prove his worth to his clan.

It was important for me to keep pushing the envelope and evolving the franchise in different ways. It just makes for an incredibly unique experience—like riding your favorite theme park ride and feeling that rush all over again. It’s why I think we all want to get off our couches and go see movies—to see things we haven't seen before.

How did you approach expanding upon the lore of the Yautja?
To make a movie about one of horror/sci-fi’s most treasured villains was a delicate dance because on the one hand, the thing that made the Predator so special—what makes all our legendary horror/sci-fi creatures special—is mystery. In the first “Predator” movie, when we finally saw the jungle hunter for the first time and saw what it was wearing, it spoke to a culture and the fact that they’re not just a mindless or a supernatural force of evil. There's clearly an intelligence. They can travel faster than light to different planets and have a weaponry that’s almost like evil James Bond in terms of gadgetry. And that’s the fun they bring. So, I certainly wanted to give people an experience that now focuses on the species and their culture. I wanted people to be able to find a point of connection to the bad guys of the universe. It's a harsh, brutal, clan-based culture. For the first time, we go to their home planet and see a bit more about how they exist, but there’s still a great deal of mystery there.

Tell us more about Dek. What makes him such a unique protagonist?
Dek is a unique protagonist in that he is, on the one hand, the underdog with something to prove—which we can all relate to—but he’s also still a ferocious badass. We’re more used to watching characters like him in hitman movies, where we know that those folks are bad guys but we’re still rooting for them to do a good thing just this once. So we can relate to Dek on the most universal emotional level, but we’re also pulling for him to learn something, to figure stuff out in a way that we don’t normally see in this genre.

What can you tell us about Thia?
When I was first thinking about the movie, I knew it would be a mistake to put any humans in it, because as soon as we put a human in, we're all going to be drawn to them more than the creature. And I wanted to make sure that the audience sided with Dek. Of course, the next thought was…maybe this is a beautiful movie about a monster and a robot. And so Dek, who is very much a creature of few words, meets Thia, a robot who has been severed in half and clearly broken, yet is unflappable and effervescent and does not stop talking.

What made Dimitrius Schuster-Koloamatangi the ideal actor to play Dek?
Dimitrius was one of the most remarkable finds of my career. He had a lovely audition, but we wanted to see what he was capable of physically, so we had a day where we brought in a bunch of stunt performers

and set up an obstacle course. The way Dimitrius navigated that course was insane. The swashbuckle he brought to all the sliding, jumping, leaping and weapon work was cooler than the stuntmen. Dimitrius had a special physicality. Then on set, Dimitrius showed up not just for the physical work, but for the emotional work. It was unbelievable to see where he went. I wasn't prepared for how he brought so much to this creature who's simultaneously vulnerable, but terrifying, ferocious and visceral.

What made Elle Fanning the perfect choice for Thia?
Elle is remarkable in that she's both highly analytical, but also deeply emotional and thoughtful. She mines every scene for all its worth. She also brought a verbal dexterity to Thia, for sure. But what I didn't think of until I lucked into it with Elle, was the peculiar physical demands of this role. You'd think that you could just sit and talk, but no—there were so many different kinds of harnesses and tricks needed for pulling off the magic that is Thia.

We obviously use visual effects to see the more robotic side of Thia, but there's a way that Elle holds her body so she can feel inert and dead and come alive in ways that I thought we'd need so many more special and visual effects to pull off. She just knows how to use all her tools as an actor to make us believe in this robot. Thia also has one of the most special, unique, coolest fight scenes in the movie, and Elle was tremendous in pulling that off.

What was it like shooting on location in New Zealand?
As much as I'm impressed by Hollywood movies with big, beautiful sets, I'm more aesthetically drawn to movies that exist primarily in natural light and beautiful locations that feel tactile. New Zealand has brought that to us oftentimes in fantasy movies. Yet, fantasy usually takes place in the forest, whereas the jungle is sci-fi. This movie really needed to be both of those things, and New Zealand, thankfully, has all of it. We had access to these incredible landscapes where we only needed to subtly enhance them with visual effects to make them look otherworldly as opposed to needing to replace everything if we were in a place that wasn't quite as remarkable as New Zealand.

I think one of my favorite days of shooting was in what we call Squirt Canyon where Dek first encounters a trench that's filled with a couple feet of water. There were eels in those waters and we had to wear these waders and protective gear and we're trudging through the canyon in ways that I would've loved as a kid who grew up catching crayfish in a creek with my friends. It was like being in a scene from "The Goonies." We were on an adventure together that felt childlike and really special in that way.

What are your hopes for the film and what audiences take away from it?
All I hope for the film, all I ever hope for with any film, is that the folks watching will form a connection to these characters and feel something for them. With "Predator: Badlands" this hope is especially meaningful because the movie revolves around characters you would never ever expect to love.

Q&A WITH ELLE FANNING ("THIA/TESSA")

What attracted you to this character and this project?
It was a lot of things. First of all, I was a big fan of "Prey." I watched it on Hulu during the pandemic and it opened me up to this new world that Dan Trachtenberg, our director, had created and I was really blown away by it, especially the amount of heart and emotion in it. Those aren't aspects you think would be in a "Predator" film.

The script for "Badlands" came out of the blue, honestly. It was such a great surprise. I was in New York, I had just come off doing a play and another movie, and I didn't really know where I would be going next. But then Dan called me and said he was interested in me playing Thia. He sent the script over, I read it, and we had a Zoom call where he showed me these amazing illustrations of the world and explained his idea of what he wanted this story to be. Hearing him talk about it and seeing his passion was so exciting.

I just thought the script was wild! It was like, *wait, I don't have legs, I'm a robot, and I'm basically a backpack? How are you going to do this?* That was my main question: how are we going to make this work? But Dan had such confidence and passion in his idea that I wanted to go along for the ride. (There were a lot of jokes about that, by the way: about me going along for the ride because I was a robot backpack.) But I was up for the challenge. I'd never done anything like it before. I knew if I was going to do this, I'd have to go all-in. And the next thing I knew, I was off to New Zealand.

What was it like shooting in New Zealand?
New Zealand is gorgeous. I had never been there before. We were on the North Island, mostly and were shooting in so many beautiful locations. You'd see these landscapes of black sand and these beautiful rocks and waterfalls—for an actor, seeing that always makes things more helpful. I desperately want to get back to New Zealand and just spend more time there.

Can you talk about your character, Thia, a bit without giving away any spoilers?
My character, Thia, is an incredibly evolved robot who's been cut in half and stuck in this vulture's nest on Genna, a deadly planet where anything can kill you. She's been observing how this planet works when she meets Dek, a Yautja Predator, and while she starts off as a kind of tool for him, they become unlikely buddies.

Tell us about Dimitrius Schuster-Koloamatangi. How fun was it to work with him and what did he bring to Dek?
Dimitrius is extraordinary. I love him to death. He is such a special person. He's fun, he's kind, and you could hear him coming from a mile away because he always had his boombox with him! It's hard to be in that costume of his, but he was always so happy. And I think that is what's so unique about him and this film—what I can't wait for people to see—is that it's the most expressive we've ever seen a Predator before because it really is Dimitrius's face the whole time. Even with the VFX, you can see all of his facial

expressions and the emotion showing through. He had to learn Yautja, a whole language that was created for the film, and he would get new lines that he would have to learn in this language all the time. I was so happy to have had him because he's the only other actor I had on set. We did these scenes together, mostly back-to-back (with his Predator braids whipping me in the face all the time! *[laughs]*), but I could still feel his presence in every scene. He's such an amazing guy.

What was it like collaborating with Dan Trachtenberg?
I loved working with Dan. He was like my complete companion and support system throughout filming, as a director should be. He and I were in the trenches every day, literally and figuratively. It was blood, sweat, and tears for both of us in the best way possible. When you're talking about a story that takes place in a fantasy realm, you have so much space to create and the possibilities are infinite. But he was always so open to collaboration. We worked together to peel things back and find out what was at the core of each of these scenes. Dan is so wonderful with actors. He loves scenes, he loves dialogue. It's not just all about the action for him, but of course there's still the flashy, violent, fun, gory moments. He made every moment of the experience feel as authentic as possible. I respect him so much and I can't wait to see what his mind is going to create next.

Dan has a history of having movies with powerful female characters. Was that something you both discussed before going into this movie?
Yes, definitely. Dan writes beautiful, powerful, strong women, and that's something that struck me as I was watching "Prey," which sees a young warrior woman gain confidence as she rises. Dan has a daughter, and so I think he's been incredibly thoughtful about wanting to write stories with women whom she can look up to and be inspired by in their strength, fearlessness and complexity. And that's something that drew me to the script because Thia might be a robot, but she's complex and not at all one-dimensional.

Can you walk through how you filmed your character not having any legs?
There was a lot of wire work. When I was strapped to Dimitrius's back, I would have to sit in a sling or have my legs be wired and pulled up because if they were dragging on the ground, they would interfere with him walking. So, most of the time I was in an L shape, just chilling in something like a swing while strapped to his back. Then at times when I had to be on the ground, they would dig trenches and I would sit in the hole. They would always have to dig something, whether we were in the studio or on location, and I had to learn how to move smoothly while maneuvering myself because Thia's a robot and can do that effortlessly.

Did you have to undergo any stunt training for the film?
I did. I had to do a lot of stunt and wire work training. I'm pretty athletic; I did a lot of sports growing up and I enjoy throwing my whole body into something. So, I was game. It wasn't a ton of training, maybe about a good month of working with the stunt team, especially when we needed to learn choreography for the fight scenes, but for me, it was a lot of the wire work that I had to prepare my body for. The core strength it takes to be in the wires was a lot. Dimitrius and I were hooked back-to-back all the time and flying through the air while hooked together, and they created these wire rigs that had never been done

before. So it was figuring out weight and body distribution and learning this wheelbarrow method where I'd be sitting on a wheelbarrow with Dimitrius fully walking me. They would paint the wheelbarrow out with VFX, but he still had to cart me up hills and all sorts of things.

There was a lot of physicality involved. Especially in the fight scenes, which were some of my favorite scenes. One scene involved a combo of my stunt doubles, Rosalie Button and Abigail Swain, and me and I had so much fun. It was challenging, but I loved it.

What do you think it is about the "Predator" franchise that has resonated with audiences for decades? What do you think "Predator" fans will be excited to see for the first time with this new film?
Well, the Predator is the baddest creature out there, right? You can't get more vicious or scary than the Predator. He's iconic in that way. Typically he's the one you root against, but I'm excited that this time you see humanity in him—even though he's still bad to the bone—and we get to learn more about him and his culture in this movie.

Everything's new with "Badlands." It's full of surprises. I'm really excited for fans to learn more about the Yautja and to see them be the protagonist this time around. I'm also really excited for fans to see the comedy sprinkled in this film. And I'm so excited for fans to see it in a theater because it's so big and epic. You want to go with your friends and talk about it. I also hope it brings a lot of women to the theater.

Q&A WITH DIMITRIUS SCHUSTER-KOLOAMATANGI ("DEK")

What's your history like with the "Predator" movies? Did you watch them growing up?
I'm definitely a fan of the franchise and all the previous installments. My old man was a huge fan, too. He especially loved the original with Arnold Schwarzenegger and the movies used to play on TV every now and then growing up.

What was your reaction like when you learned you'd be playing Dek?
I didn't really believe my reps at first when they told me. I said, *no way. You're lying.* But then I had a zoom call with Dan [Trachtenberg], who caught me up on everything. I didn't take the time to really process it afterwards, I just went straight into work mode and didn't really think about it too much until maybe halfway through shooting, when people were like, *Bro, you're playing the Predator. This is an iconic character.* And then it hit me. This is pretty crazy. It's surreal. It still is.

This is the first time we're seeing the Predator—who's typically the villain of the story—become the hero. What's even more surprising is how relatable he is in this movie. How did you approach the balance of making Dek both fearsome and badass but also someone you can see yourself in?
When I was rewatching all the previous "Predator" films and looking at the comics and whatnot in my research, I realized that even though they're perceived as the villains in those films, from their

perspective, they're not. They're just on their hunt. They're doing what comes naturally to them, what's part of their culture. So, it helped seeing it from that perspective. The're not evil creatures. This is just a way of life for them. Hunting is how they gain status. We have money here on Earth, they have their trophies.

Their whole culture is based around hunting and being the best hunter you can be. So, that ferocity and aggression, it's what makes them Yautja. I think being able to see them this way makes them naturally relatable. Themes of trying to prove yourself and feeling like you're the underdog, or feeling like you're going against what's considered the norm in society—a lot of people can relate to that. It's cool to be able to bring both of those things together, ferocity and relatability, in one character.

You and Elle Fanning have a wonderful chemistry together in this movie. What was it like working with her and how did the two of you form a connection on set?
Oh man, Elle's awesome. She's so humble and hardworking. She's a professional and knows exactly how the game goes. And what struck me most was that she was always pressing for more story. *Why is this happening? Why are we doing or saying this?* It forced me to keep asking questions and to understand the "why" of the scenes.

Developing a connection with her on set was easy. There were hard, long days on set in some really tough locations, and I feel like when you're put into those situations, it's make or break. Some people will just fold under the pressure but some people they band together and get it done. Elle is the latter and it made it so easy to work with each other and bounce ideas off each other.

What was it like working with your director, Dan Trachtenberg?
It was so cool. You can tell just by talking to him that he's a massive fan of the franchise, this character, and the world of the Predator in general. Having someone so passionate about this universe inject cool new ideas into this iconic franchise—it's like he's the secret ingredient. You can see that love oozing out of him. He's always ready to create something that people like himself can enjoy. He brought a vision and energy to set that really made you feel like you were a part of something cool and made you excited to come to work.

You had to learn Yautja, a language that was specifically created for this film. Can you talk about that process a bit?
It was quite an intense challenge. I kind of underestimated how hard it would be when I was first told I'd be playing Dek because they said he would speak an alien language that hadn't been created yet. So, in my head I thought I could just freestyle and make up anything I thought was cool [*laughs*]! And then they sent me an email the next week with Britton Watkins, the man who created the language, who helped me run lines and learn the language.

It turned out to be really fun, but it was hard at first because it forced me to use different muscles in my throat that would leave it sore, especially after the first session. The clicking and shapes your mouth has to make took a lot of repetition to perfect. But it also helped me fully transform into Dek because when I

speak the language, I have to change my whole body posture to be able to produce the words. Your body has to fill itself up, in a way. I really enjoyed it because it helped me fully let go of Dimitrius and embody the character.

Your face wasn't covered during filming to enable better VFX capture of your facial expressions, but can you talk about the rest of your look?
My arms and legs were prosthetic limbs that they slipped on one-by-one. Then the hands and feet would come on separately, and then there's an open cowl with Dek's neck and braids. I'm not going to lie, it was heavy. It was an extra 15 kilograms I had to carry, but it played in my favor because Yautja are naturally heavier than humans. Their body mass and muscle proportions are significantly different to humans. So it helped me stay grounded. My natural movements are fast and jittery. I like to be quick, so it was good to have all of that extra costuming weigh me down.

It's a heavy suit and it gets quite hot in there. You're constantly shedding water. I also had to wear contacts that would kind of blow my vision, but I used all those challenges for the character. It was kind of like—this is why he's angry all the time! Because he's never comfortable. So I think it really helped me sell a lot of the emotion I had to deliver.

You filmed this movie in your native New Zealand. How proud are you, as a Kiwi, to showcase New Zealand in this way?
[*Pounds chest*] It's so exciting. I love it. I feel like this part of the world, in my non-biased opinion, is the most beautiful part of the world. New Zealand's a small country, but it has so much to offer. Not only in terms of our locations and how diverse they are—I mean, everyone who's seen "Lord of the Rings" knows how beautiful New Zealand is—but also the people. We had a lot of New Zealand crew on this film and, like I said before, there were hard days, but everyone had a real Kiwi attitude and work ethic of, *yeah, it's hard, but we're harder. We can get it done*.

Did you have to undergo any specific stunt or weapons training for the role?
A lot of it was prepping my body to be able to withstand the suit. So a lot of physical strength training, especially when it came to the swords. During training they would tape two swords together to make it massively heavy. The fight choreographer, Vincent, said when you're trained on a heavier sword, it makes it easier to film. You don't need to think about it. But my arms would be dead during training. Every time I'd try to swing, I couldn't even lift it. But he'd force me to go again and again. But it worked. I would get on set and be handed the normal sword and it felt like paper.

What are your hopes for the film when it releases?
I hope that fans of the "Predator" franchise get satisfaction out of watching a film that they've been wanting for a long time. I think this is something people have been dying to see for a long time, and because this film literally exists because of the fans, I hope they'll enjoy it. And I hope that it's able to introduce a new generation of fans to the franchise and make more people root for this iconic character.

BEHIND-THE-SCENES FACTS ABOUT THE MAKING OF "PREDATOR: BADLANDS"

CONSTRUCTING YAUTJA

- Linguist Britton Watkins, a polyglot with a lifelong fascination with language, was brought on board to officially construct Yautja, an all-new language or "conlang" that the Predators speak.

- Watkins notes, "It's the first time you're hearing Yautja dialogue clearly spoken in a feature film. There've been a couple of lines spoken here and there in the films since 1987, and there was a language created for some of the novels that got some interest in the fan base, but for the purposes of this film, I ignored all of that."

  Why, you ask? Why create a language from scratch when the beginnings of a foundation had already been built? The answer is simple according to Watkins: "You have to look at the actual Predator's face. The language that was done for the books had sounds that you fundamentally need *lips* in order to make. And it has "*th's*" and other things that you need a human dental ridge to be able to make with the tongue. So, I intentionally constructed sounds that you could make with Yautja physiology."

- Watkins focused on making the majority of the sounds originate in the vocal tract and the back of the throat and mouth, while still being easily pronounceable by human actors.

- As for the written alphabet, Watkins took inspiration from the original glyphs that creature designer Alec Gillis created for the first film. "I didn't use those letters specifically, but it's definitely inspired by the original shapes mostly so that there's a visual continuity on screen."

- While Yautja was not inspired by any actual spoken languages, Watkins did infuse a few sounds into the conlang once he learned that Dimitrius Schuster-Koloamatangi and other New Zealand actors were cast as the Predators. "There's a sound, similar to the Māori word for 'no' that I knew anyone with a familiarity with Māori would be able to say—that's in there, but I purposely didn't use any sounds that people would associate with any particular human language."

- Watkins spent several sessions training Schuster-Koloamatangi over Zoom. "Dimitrius did have to train his vocal cords, but he picked it up very, very quickly, and toward the end he'd been doing it for so long that he can pronounce certain sounds more strongly than I can, because he's had to do it on set over and over again, and then in ADR over and over again. He's a pro at this stage."

- In terms of grammatic structure, the word order in Yautja is the reverse of English. Instead of subject-verb-object, it's object-verb-subject. So, "I eat chocolate" in Yautja would be "chocolate eat I."

- Watkins also made sure to slip in a few Easter eggs: The words for “sun” and “friend” are “Dan” and “Alec.”

CREATURE DESIGN

- **Predator creature designer Alec Gillis**—who began his career working on the OG “Alien” and “Predator” films under the legendary special effects master Stan Winston, and has since worked on almost all the films within those franchises since—reunited with Trachtenberg after working with the director on 2022’s “Prey.”

- To have Genna, the deadliest planet in the universe, live up to its billing, Gillis worked with Trachtenberg to make both flora and fauna equally terrifying. Everything—from the bone bison and razor grass, to Bud and the Kalisk, to the squirts and elephant trees—was conceptualized to make every inch of Genna deadly.

- Trachtenberg, Gillis and Wētā FX drew inspiration for the design of the Kalisk from a number of beasts, both real and fictional, including the lovable creatures of Hayao Miyazaki films, video games such as “Shadow of the Colossus,” and deep sea creatures from our very own planet.

- According to Gillis, “The challenge behind creating Bud was knowing what she’d evolve into. She seems harmless at first, but then you realize she can tear you to shreds.” He looked toward nature’s own strange series of evolutions, like tadpoles and the frogs they’d eventually become, for inspiration.

- Gillis worked hand-in-hand with Wētā Workshop to create the incredibly detailed prosthetic Predator suits and weaponry. He kept in mind that Dek is a young Predator (roughly 14 or 15 years old) who is not as physically imposing as other Yautja, but ferocious nonetheless. Dek’s limbs were made shorter and thicker, which gives him the appearance of a “stocky fireplug.”

VFX

- With every frame of the film requiring some form of VFX wizardry to immerse viewers in the world of Genna, “Badlands” needed a VFX legend at the helm. Enter **visual effects supervisor Olivier Dumont** (“Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness,” “Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings”), who served as the maestro overseeing a veritable murderers’ row of acclaimed effects houses in order to achieve the stunning look of the film. The houses included New Zealand’s famed Wētā Workshop, Framestore, ILM, Trixster, Perception, and ILP.

- “Badlands” marks the first time in the “Predator” franchise where the eponymous character stays unmasked for most of the film. Initially, the team explored capturing Dek with an animatronic mask that was remote controlled, but Trachtenberg quickly realized “the emotional demands of the character in this movie were far beyond anything we've ever done before… expression that, up until now, has been largely fear- and intimidation-based. But now, we need this creature with these giant mandibles and fangs to really deliver a powerhouse performance that we can see ourselves in, despite it being a monster.”

  To capture the nuances of Dek’s emotions and facial expressions, actor Dimitrius Schuster-Koloamatangi filmed all his scenes in full costume, but with an open cowl exposing his real face. Wētā digital then used Dimitrius’s facial capture in its VFX, with the final result giving us a Predator unlike any we’ve seen before: one whose anger, hurt, determination, ferocity and, in fleeting moments, sense of humor show beneath those famous mandibles.

  Says Dumont: “It’s a big step, I feel, having a monster we’ve seen before now being able to express emotions. This is now a *character*. So, the goal during the shoot was to try to get as much emotion from our actor as possible and not have him wear a mask.”

- Elle Fanning’s character, Thia, spends a good portion of the film strapped to Dek’s back. This, of course, required Fanning’s lower half to be digitally erased in post-production, but capturing the effect during filming required more practical ingenuity. To give Fanning a more weightless effect while strapped to Schuster-Koloamatangi’s back, the actress was actually seated in an “L” position, with her legs propped up with harnesses and wires, wheelbarrows, or rolling benches, depending on the landscape they were shooting in.

STUNTS

- **Stunt coordinator Jacob Tomuri** (a veteran stunt performer who served as Tom Hardy’s double in “Mad Max: Fury Road”) tailored Dek’s skillset to what the story called for, using his smaller stature to his advantage and making him more agile and nimble than other Yautja. It also helped that Dimitrius Schuster-Koloamatangi is naturally athletic, which allowed him to pick up quickly on whatever training (primarily footwork, strength conditioning and swordsmanship) was thrown his way quickly.

- For a jaw-dropping sequence involving both halves of Thia, two stunt doubles—Abigail Swain and Rosalie Button—worked alongside Elle Fanning to capture a one-of-a-kind buddy fight. Swain doubled as Fanning’s torso for certain moves that were too risky for Fanning to film herself, while Button’s legs doubled as Thia’s lower half. Button also performed her choreography with her hands behind her back, to not only make her movements more convincing, but also help the VFX team out in post-production.

Making the sequence even more challenging was the need for Thia to fight several synths, all of whom are played by the same actor who needed to learn the choreography for each individual fight with Thia.

- Mike Homik, the actor who plays Dek's older brother, Kwei, was deliberately cast for his height—he's 6'8"—and for his background as a former stunt performer.

PRODUCTION DESIGN & LOCATIONS

- Oscar®-nominated **production designer Ra Vincent**, leaned into the natural, lush beauty of his native New Zealand to provide the otherworldly foundations for the planet Genna. Production took place on location in and around the North Island and Auckland.

- Locations included Hunua Falls and Te Henga (Bethells Beach) in Auckland; Denize Bluffs in Piopio; and Hamurana Springs, Rotorua (Redwoods).

  "We needed a lush planet that felt devoid of human life, but had a lot of flora and fauna and was vibrant and color-rich, so we tried to ground the world in New Zealand's rugged countryside and thick jungles," says Vincent. "One of the wonderful things about coming to New Zealand in the middle of winter is that it's an extremely damp environment, which some people weren't prepared for [*laughs*]. But I think it added to the visual experience of the film because there's no way you can fake cold, wet, drowning rain and mud one day and then burning hot sun the next quite the same way New Zealand can naturally."

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